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Montessori Stepping Stones™  A global children community

“Celebrating the wonders of learning and respect”

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1. **Purpose**

To ensure that suggestions, complaint (grievances) and appeals, have a defined process to follow and can be dealt with in manner that resolves the cause satisfactorily in the most simple and expeditious form.

- To ensure each family/custodian and each parent feels empowered to provide suggestions, raise concerns about all aspects of the operation of Montessori Stepping Stones as well as to raise contentious issues, and provide critical feedback without any concern that their comments will lead to any victimisation of prejudice to themselves or their child.
- To allow management to monitor the quality of service provided and identify any deficiencies.
- To encourage staff to be responsive to the needs and concerns of Families/Custodians and their children; thus helping to develop and refine our service and its practices and procedures.
- To encourage comments and responses from parents/custodian and contractors (3rd parties, that can lead to improvements in service quality.
- To focus on the needs of children and their Families/Custodians/custodians with the intent of resolving the complaint (grievance) to their satisfaction wherever possible within the group setting.
- To encourage a culture at Montessori Stepping Stones that values comment and response as an opportunity for continually raising and dealing with necessary improvements to our services.

2. **Scope**

Management, staff and parents as well as custodians of children enrolled at Montessori Stepping Stones.

3. **Description/General**

Through Montessori Stepping Stones’ continuous improvement system and its objective towards preventative actions and continuous improvement the aim is to prevent any situation where a customer (all stake holders) of Montessori Stepping Stones should have a grievance, need to appeal or complain.

Communication and the ability to objectively and factually listen to suggestions or the potential cause for grievance, complaint or appeal and then providing options to resolve the issue instantly may resolve causes immediately. Everyone should aim at solving any issue immediately with anyone involved and at the most direct organisational level possible. Being attentive and open for needs of others is paramount in an organisation, for positive business as well as operational outcomes as well as human beings interacting with each other.

Families/Custodians are actively encouraged to be involved in all aspects of our service delivery, which is based on the principles of equity, affordability, and accountability.
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For Families/Custodians/custodians to have confidence in the quality of care provided by our service; it is important that they are aware of their ability to influence the nature of the service.

This means that Families/Custodians know they have a right to comment on or appeal against any action or decision, which has unfavourable consequences for them or their children. This grievance, appeals and complaint policy is formal recognition, promotion and protection of each family/custodian's rights. Young children often react poorly to changing their child care services, causing upset disruption and concern for parents. Hence, it is important that parents have a viable alternative to dealing with problems that arise with their child's care and education, without having to move their child to another centre.

Each family/custodian has a right to a positive response from the centre - its staff and management - to meeting the family/custodian's particular needs.

4. DEFINITIONS/PRINCIPLES/STRATEGIES

In all cases, upon receipt of notification of a suggestion, grievance, appeal or complaint the member of staff involved will inform the Managing or Assistant Managing Director as soon as is practical. In no circumstances will any individual employee make a decision in a suggestion, an appeal or grievance matter without consultation with the Managing or Assistant Managing Director.

If the grievance relates to a customer the immediate Montessori Stepping Stones staff member is the first point of contact. If this is not possible the individual must inform the Managing or Assistant Managing Director as soon as is practical.

The Managing or Assistant Managing Director will:

- Encourage staff to identify family/custodian concerns and ensure such concerns are addressed at the earliest opportunity.
- Establish unbiased centre procedures to reduce any potential power inequities between Families/Custodians and our service.
- Ensure that Families/Custodians are not treated unfairly or that the service(s) will be withheld if they raise a concern, grievance or complaint.
- Deal with all grievances promptly and keep the complainant well informed of progress toward the resolution of the grievance.
- Protect the rights of staff members relating to any grievance, and ensure all outcomes will be based on the principles of natural justice. Ensure all processes and procedures adopted are clear, transparent and fully explained to all concerned.
- Maintain privacy and confidentiality to the maximum extent possible and assure Families/Custodians and staff of this.
- Give Families/Custodians written information concerning the Suggestion, Grievance, Appeals and Complaints Policy at enrolment, and explain the policy to Families/Custodians in a positive welcoming manner.
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- Ensure this Suggestion, Grievance, Appeals and Complaints Policy and related procedures are displayed within the centre building, visible to all staff and Families/Custodians.
- Ensure information about grievances is given on a regular basis, as Families/Custodians may not remember all information given during the busy enrolment period.
- Keep a register of all grievances received, detailing action taken to address the matter, who was involved and the outcome.

All staff will:
- Encourage Families/Custodians to feel comfortable about making suggestions, raising concerns, by being open and positive in responding to Families/Custodians.
- Ensure any such suggestions, concerns raised with you are addressed at the earliest opportunity, whether they concern you personally or not.
- Respond in a positive manner when a family/custodian has chosen to approach you with a concern about another staff member. Treat the matter with the utmost confidentiality, and raise the matter with the staff member concerned or with the Director, as you feel appropriate.

If the grievance is against the Managing or Assistant Managing Director, the staff member may raise the matter with the Children's Services Coordinator. Where a grievance raised by a family/custodian has been resolved, inform the Managing or Assistant Managing Director of the success of that process.

Where you are uncertain about how to deal with a grievance raised by a family/custodian, you should seek support and assistance from either another staff person or the Director. Once the matter is resolved, you should inform the Director of the outcome of that process.

Where you are unable to deal with a grievance raised by a family/custodian, or where the grievance issue is outside your control, you should seek support or assistance from the Director. Maintain privacy and confidentiality for families/custodians, children and other staff to the maximum extent possible. Families/Custodians will be encouraged by all staff to follow the following procedure:

Families/Custodians are asked to raise all grievances at centre-level first. This will give those most closely involved an opportunity to address any issues in the light of a detailed awareness of the everyday issues faced at the centre and a detailed knowledge of the family/custodian and child.

Families/Custodians are asked to remain aware that at any stage of a suggestion, grievance/appeal/complaint procedure, they may ask any other person to act as an agent, support, adviser or intermediary on their behalf. If appropriate and family members /custodians feels comfortable doing so, the family/custodian may approach the staff member involved and if needed set a time where the matter can be discussed appropriately. Grievances at this level will normally be resolved by discussion and clarification of the needs or wishes of the family/custodian or by clarification by the staff member of the centre procedures or polices.
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If the family member/custodian does not wish to speak with the particular staff-member involved, then they may approach another staff-member with whom they do feel comfortable. With the family/custodian’s consent, this staff member may then approach the original person and explain the grievance.

The Director or person in charge will subsequently be notified about the grievance and its outcome.

**Verbal Procedure at Centre Level**

The family/custodian may raise their suggestions, grievance with the Centre Director, (if the previous step does not produce a satisfactory outcome to the parties involved or if the person concerned feels it is not appropriate).

The Director will research the grievance/situation and work towards reaching a satisfactory outcome for all parties involved. Again grievances at this level will normally be resolved by discussion and clarification of the needs or wishes of the family/custodian or by clarification by the Director of polices and/or procedures involved.

**Written Procedure at Centre Level**

Suggestion, Grievance, Complaint *(Non Conformity Report)* Form and the Conformity Action Report Form are to be used to write down issues arising that cannot be dealt with verbally and positively. Resolution may also involve the development of new policy or procedures if the matter or point of view raised has not previously arisen or been considered at the centre. Families/Custodians are asked to raise all suggestion, grievances directly and at centre-level first. After exhausting all communication pathways i.e. verbal and/or written, with the appropriate staff/parents at the centre level, Families/Custodians/staff may raise their suggestions, grievance with the Children’s Services Adviser, if the previous step does not produce a satisfactory outcome to the parties involved or if the person concerned feels it is not appropriate.

The Coordinator will research the grievance/situation and try to reach a satisfactory outcome for all parties involved. Grievances at this level will not normally be able to be resolved by further discussion and/or clarification since such discussion will have already occurred. Resolution may involve the development of new policy or procedures or the provision of new information or viewpoints to support or explain the centre’s existing policies and procedures. If mediation is required then the Coordinator will either act as mediator or ensure a mediator acceptable to both parties is available to assist.

**Outside agencies**

If satisfactory resolution could not be met at these levels the issue may be raised at the

**Child Care Licensing and Standards Unit**

*Ph: (08) 6210 3333 (metro)*

**Address:**

1st Floor, 111 Wellington Street, East Perth, WA 6004

**Postal:**

PO Box 6242, East Perth Business Centre, East Perth, WA 6892

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Hard copies are uncontrolled, refer to P:\Centre Operation for current controlled copy
5. RESPONSIBILITY (IES)

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<td>Amendment</td>
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Legend: MD = Managing Director, AD = Assistant Director, ST = Staff, PTC = Parent/Custodian, CU = Customer, CO = Contractor.

6. REVIEW, EVALUATION & AMENDMENT

The Suggestions, Complaints (Grievances) & Appeals Policy, Process, Procedure and/or associated Tasks/Forms are to be reviewed as required or immediately if deficiencies are identified (at least once a year from last publishing).

All perceived deficiencies in the Suggestions, Complaints (Grievances) & Appeals Policy, Process, Procedure and/or associated Tasks are to be documented and investigated to determine whether a deficiency exists, and, if so:

a. the impact of the deficiency;
b. how the policy should be amended to eliminate the deficiency; and
c. whether the suggested amendment is consistent with a ‘best practice strategy’.

If the amendment is supported, the amendment will be effective immediately.
8. TASK FORMS

- Non Conformity Report Grievance, Complaint Form
- QIP Action Plan

9. REFERENCES

- NCAC Quality Area 1 – Staff Relationships with Children and Peers (1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6)
- NCAC Quality Area 2 – Partnerships with Families/Custodians (2.1, 2.2, 2.3)
- NCAC Quality Area 3 – Programming and Evaluation (3.2, 3.3)
- NCAC Quality Area 4 – Children’s Experiences and Learning (4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6)
- NCAC Quality Area 5 – Protective Care and Safety (5.1, 5.2)
- NCAC Quality Area 7 – Managing to Support Quality (7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4)
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READINGS/SOURCES/SITES

- Young Children, (January), 4-9.
- Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cwlth)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cwlth)
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Cwlth)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act,1984, WA
- Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996,
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cwlth)
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cwlth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cwlth)